Fire accidents in Ordnance Depot

322. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK:
SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM:
PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV:
SHRI SURYABHAN PATIL VAHADANE:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether within a month of Bharatpur Ordnance Depot blaze resulting in heavy losses of ammunition another Ordnance Depot at Kanpur was ablaze on 28th May, 2000;

(b) if so, the cause of such fire in phased manner and the extent of damage suffered thereby, Depot- wise;

(c) whether any inquiry has been conducted into these accidents of fire and if so, the findings of the inquiry; and

(d) the steps taken and being taken to augment safety of the Ordnance Depots against fires?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir. There was a fire in one of the sheds of Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur on 28 May, 2000.

(b) and (c) Findings of the Court of Inquiry on the fire accident at Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur are not conclusive about the cause of fire and attribute the fire and subsequent spreading to a possible electric short circuit, high temperatures and the presence of strong winds. Recommendations of the Court of Inquiry, *inter alia* , include (i) the need to provide funds for additional covered storage, (ii) for each guard post and watch tower to be provided with telephonic communications, (iii) in view of threat of short circuiting due to over head electric cables, in future under ground cabling be resorted to and (iv) a fresh Board should be convened to re-assess the requirement of fire fighting equipment in view of the additional ammunition holding in the Depot. About 1200 metric tonne of ammunition costing Rs. 393 crores has been destroyed in this fire. To assess the cause of fire at Central Ordnance Depot, Kanpur, a Court of Inquiry has been ordered and its report is awaited. The value of the weapons destroyed in the fire in the Kanpur Depot has been estimated at Rs. 4 crores approximately.

(d) After the fire accident in Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur the Raksha Mantri took a series of meetings of officers of Ministry of Defence and Army

Hqrs. where, *inter alia*, it was decided that the Army would prepare an action plan to bring all ammunition under proper and standard cover within two years and senior officers will be sent to all Ammunition Depots to inspect the safety and security of the Depots and prevent a recurrence of such an incident in the future.

Purchase of T-90 Tanks

323. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the deal with Russia to purchase hundred T-90 main battle tanks has been finalised;

(b) if not, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) what is the response of Russia; and

(d) by when, it is likely to be finalised?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Price Negotiation Committee has not yet concluded negotiations with the Russian side. The procurement can be finalised only after negotiations are concluded.

Recruitment of Youths from Gujarat in Army

324. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Army Recruitment Camps are held in Ahmedabad for recruitment of youths from Gujarat in the Army;

(b) the number of vacancies to be filled up from Gujarat in such a recent Camp held in middle of June, 2000;

(c) the number of persons who turned up for recruitment; and

(d) whether requisite number of recruits were selected or not?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There were no fixed vacancies for this rally. Recruitment in a rally depends on response and number of candidates passing the examination.

(c) and (d) Details of candidates screened and selected in the recruitment